

**IN THE ABSTRACT:**

The previously submitted abstract has been amended as set forth below. A clean version of the amended abstract is being submitted herewith on a separate sheet.

**Amended Abstract**

A writing instrument has a tubular member having a longitudinal axis and an aperture at an end thereof. A writing component is mounted in the tubular member and has a writing tip at an end portion thereof. The tubular member and the writing component are movable relative to one another in an axial ~~directions~~ direction along the longitudinal axis of the tubular member between a writing position at which the writing tip protrudes from the aperture of the tubular member and a housed position at which the writing tip is disposed in the tubular member. An airtight sleeve is connected to the end portion of the writing component for movement between an advanced position and a retracted position. The airtight sleeve has a bore through which the end portion of the writing component passes during movement of the writing component between the writing position and the housed position.